

Jumbo romance

Staff and agencies
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Two young elephants form a heart shape with their trunks
It's a very traditional love story - just on a bigger scale than usual.

A tame female elephant has fled an Indian circus after eloping with a wild bull elephant that broke open a gate and led her off into the jungle, her distraught handler said today.

"I brought up Savitri since she joined the circus two decades ago," Kalimudddin Sheikh, who unsuccessfully tried to lure his charge away from her new beau, added.

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The wild male, who wildlife officials believe was probably in musth - the periodic condition in which bull elephants seek to mate - turned up at the travelling circus when it stopped in the village of Kumar Bazar, in West Bengal state, yesterday.

It broke into an enclosure and led Savitri into the jungle, with the pair being followed by three other female elephants in the same pen. Their trumpeting alerted circus workers, who led them back.

Savitri's mind, however, seemed made up. According to one forestry official, she was last seen bathing with the bull in a jungle pond.

When handlers called for Savitri to come to them, she looped her trunk around the bull's leg and "he protectively shielded her like in a Bollywood blockbuster," the official said.